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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SMALL IRAQI PARTY SEEKS SOUTHERN REGION & HIGH ELECTION
HOPES

CLASSIFIED BY: Howell H. Howard, Director, U.S. Regional Embassy
Office, Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C//REL USA, MCFI) SUMMARY: Abd al-Rizak al-Saadi, the
Secretary General of a minor political party called the Federal

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Democratic Iraq Coalition (FDIC) met Regional Embassy Office
(REO) Basrah to explain his party's vision for a three-province
southern region in Iraq to prohibit Iranian interference, cleave
the south from Najaf's clerical influences, and make the South
more autonomous from Baghdad. He described his party as
non-sectarian, inclusive, nationalist and mostly comprised of
intellectuals. Given the disdain Iraqis had for the religious
parties' failure to govern, he hoped the FDIC would do well in
future elections. End Summary.

SEEKING TO CREATE A SOUTHERN REGION

¶2. (C//REL USA, MCFI) Saadi told REO Poloff April 27 that one of
the FDIC's main objectives was to turn Basrah, Maysan and Dhi
Qar provinces into a single region. To that end, Saadi said that
he organized a "Southern Tribal Council" of civil society
groups, editors, artists, and intellectuals to lobby for a
region. Saadi told us that the South needed to become a region
to protect itself from Iranian interference, separate it from
the clerical influence of Najaf, and achieve some autonomy from
Baghdad. When asked why amalgamate those three specific
provinces, Saadi said that they had the most in common
culturally and economically, they suffered the most under Saddam
Hussein, and three provinces would be easier to control than the
nine-province region proposed by the Islamic Supreme Council of
Iraq (ISCI).

THE PARTY LINE

¶3. (C//REL USA, MCFI) He described FDIC as secular, inclusive
and nationalist; it is mostly comprised of intellectuals. The
main points of their party manifesto as described in a pamphlet
given to Poloff are:

- Iraq is a federal and unified country
- Federalism is a matter of choice for Iraqis
- Islam is the State religion and forms the basis of civil laws
while respecting constitutional rights of other ethnic groups
- Equal distribution of Iraq's wealth
- Obligatory military service
- Defend women's rights

- Protect children
- State provided free education
- State provided free health care
- Create consumer protection commissions
- Establish a free-trade economy and trade liberalization
- Develop the agricultural and tourist sectors
- Improve the banking sector and develop insurance companies
- Internationally, cooperate with other democracies.

ELECTION OUTLOOK

14. (C//REL USA, MCFI) Saadi told us that his party participated in the 2005 elections on the 569 List, but had not won any seats. Given the growing discontent among Iraqis for the religious parties' failure to govern, he hoped Iraqis would flock to his party as a potential alternative. They were working to recruit new members by sponsoring cultural events, providing humanitarian aid, running training programs for unemployed youths, and already formed a tribal committee to court prominent sheikhs. He also said that other parties, like Fadhila and ISCI, were trying to court them in turn, but FDIC was "holding them at arm's length." To get on FDIC's list, a candidate needs at least a bachelor's degree, to have no ties to religious parties, and to demonstrate leadership potential.

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

15. (C//REL USA, MCFI) This was our first meeting with Saadi, so we asked him for some biographical data. He described himself as a very wealthy 44-year old businessman owning import/export, construction, cinema, and security companies. He holds a Master's in Modern Philosophy from Baghdad University. He also said that his family was former communists, that he was detained in the 1991 Shia uprising against Saddam, and that three of his family members were killed during the uprising.

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